

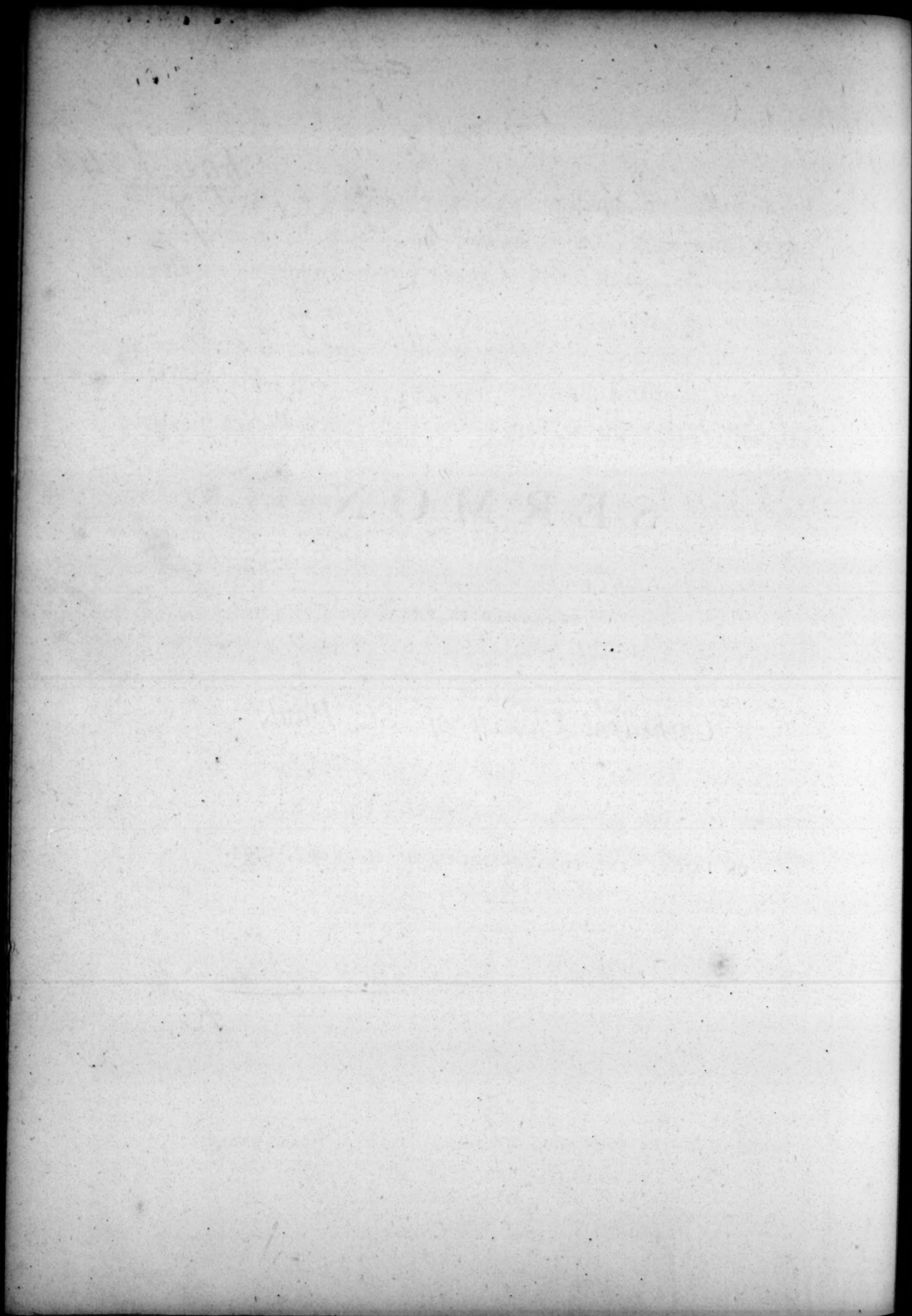
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S E R M O N

P R E A C H E D I N T H E

Cathedral Church of St. Paul,

O N F R I D A Y , T H E T W E N T Y - E I G H T H O F F E B R U A R Y , 1 7 9 4 .



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A
S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE

Cathedral Church of St. Paul,

BEFORE THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD MAYOR,

THE

ALDERMEN, SHERIFFS,

AND

CITY OFFICERS,

ON FRIDAY, THE TWENTY-EIGHTH OF FEBRUARY, 1794.

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED

BY HIS MAJESTY

To be observed as a General Fast.

By GEORGE STEPNEY TOWNLEY, M.A.

CHAPLAIN TO HIS LORDSHIP.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. WILSON, AVE MARIA LANE, LUDGATE STREET.

MDCCXCIV.

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

Cathedral Church of St. Paul

ON THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD MAYOR,

THE

ALDERMEN, SHERIFFS,

AND

CITY OFFICERS,

OF THE CITY OF LONDON, THE TWENTY-NINTH OF JANUARY, 1794.

BY THE REV. AND

BY HIS MAJESTY

TO THE HONOURABLE THE LORD MAYOR,

BY GEORGE STEPHENSON, M.A.

CHURCHMAN TO HIS LORDSHIP

LONDON:

PRINTED BY W. BARNARD, AND SOLD BY ALL THE BOOKSELLERS.

1794.

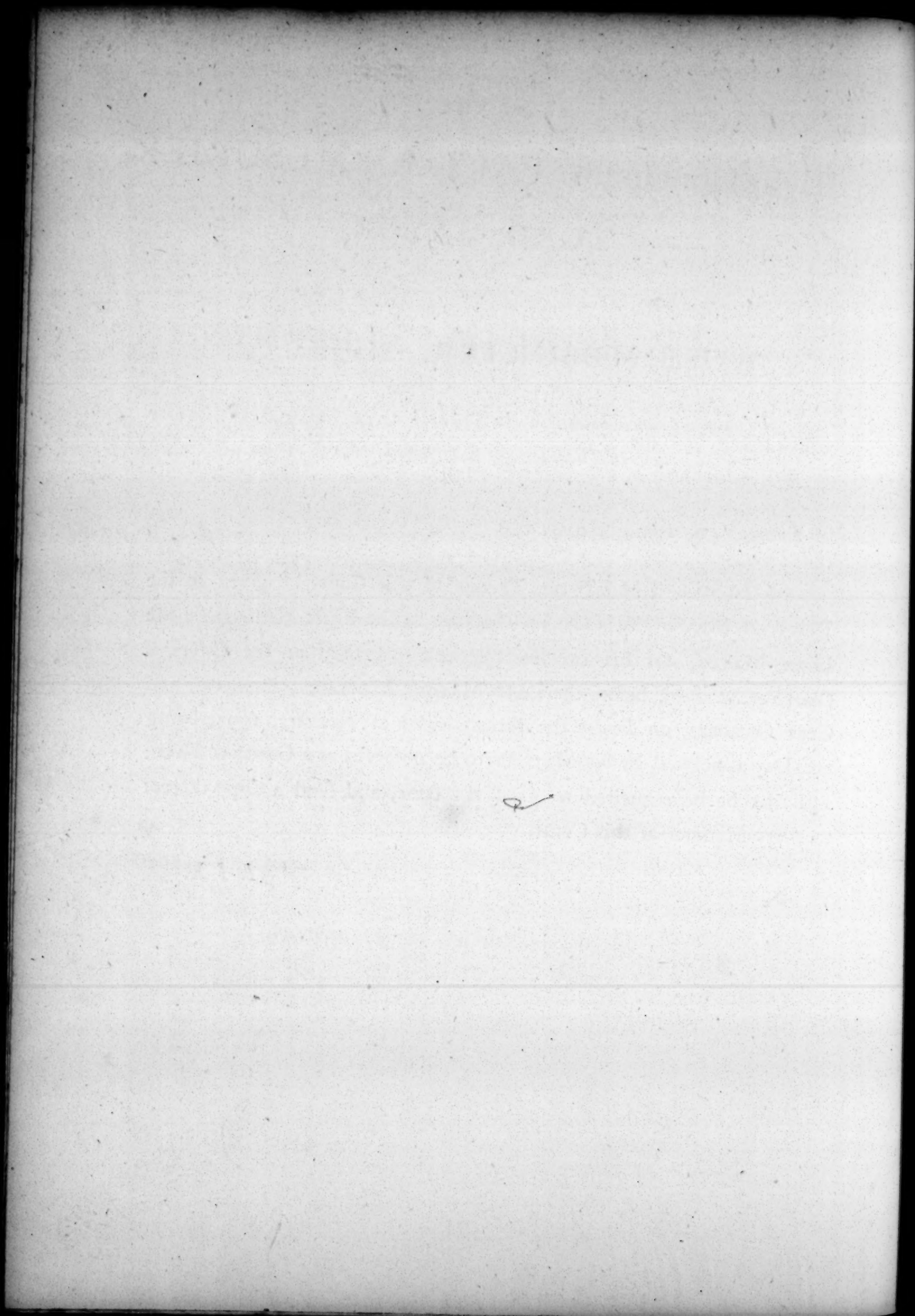
LE MESURIER, MAYOR.

*A Common Council holden in the Chamber of the Guildhall of the City
of London, on Thursday the 6th Day of March, 1794.*

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

THAT the Thanks of this Court be given to the Reverend Mr. TOWNLEY, Chaplain to the Right Honourable the LORD MAYOR, for his excellent Sermon preached at the *Cathedral Church of St. Paul*, before the LORD MAYOR, ALDERMEN, SHERIFFS, and CITY OFFICERS, on *Friday the Twenty-eighth of February, 1794*, being the Day appointed by his MAJESTY to be observed as a GENERAL FAST; and that he be requested to print the same, and send a Copy thereof to every Member of this Court.

R I X.



TO THE
Right Honourable PAUL LE MESURIER,
LORD MAYOR,

THE
WORSHIPFUL THE ALDERMEN,

THE
SHERIFFS,

AND THE
COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LONDON,

THIS
SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE
Cathedral Church of St. Paul,

ON FRIDAY THE TWENTY-EIGHTH OF FEBRUARY, 1794,

AND PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THEIR OBEDIENT SERVANT,

WALBROOK,
MARCH 22, 1794.

THE AUTHOR.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

CHICAGO, ILL.

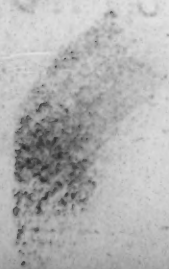
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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

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U. C. P.



ISAIAH, CHAP. XXVI. PART OF THE NINTH VERSE.

WHEN THY JUDGMENTS ARE IN THE EARTH, THE INHABITANTS OF
THE WORLD WILL LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THOUGH “the Heavens declare the glory of God, and
“the firmament sheweth his handy work,” yet that con-
tinued manifestation of divine power and wisdom does not
fill the hearts of men with praise and gratitude. The sun
shines bright in the firmament; the moon performs her
appointed revolutions: “Seed-time and harvest, summer
“and winter, day and night do not cease.—“O that men
“would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness; and
“declare the wonders that He doeth for the children of
“men!”—Were the sun for one day not to finish his
course, with what astonishment would our hearts be filled!
with what amazement should we contemplate such a mar-
vellous act of divine power! but is the manifestation of

B

divine

divine power less marvellous, which causes that “ great
“ light,” day by day, ages after ages, to dispense unto us
blessings?

The Globe we inhabit is replete with wonders — “ the
“ Earth is full of the goodness of the Lord”—but because
those wonders present themselves on every side, we forget
to render to God “ the honour due unto his holy name.”

The numberless mercies of God are designed to lead and
preserve us in the way of righteousness: our neglect
and frequent abuse of those mercies render “ judgments”
most expedient for us. They are indeed represented in
Scripture as God’s “ strange work;” that in which He
delighteth not: but infinitely beneficial will they prove, if,
from his judgments now in the earth, “ the inhabitants of
“ the world will learn righteousness.”—

It will not, I trust, be either foreign from the general
argument in the text, or inapplicable to the solemnity of
this day, if—in the first place, I direct your attention to
some instances of the *Want* of righteousness observable among
ourselves; and—secondly, from the miserable example of
our present continental foes, urge the necessity of “ learning
“ righteousness,”

“righteousness,” lest, in our nation and persons, we experience the just judgments of God. —

I. — Without detracting, on the one hand, from the commendation due in private life to the many examples, in which a just sense of duty is displayed in correspondent acts of virtue; and in public life to the numerous instances, which testify unrivalled benevolence and charity; without intending, on the other hand, to overcharge the description of our transgressions, or presuming to ascertain the measure of our offences; yet, on contemplating our present national character, in a moral and religious light, we must confess there is abundant reason to humble our souls before God; to deprecate his judgments; and in contrition to acknowledge, that, as a nation, God has hitherto “punished us less than our iniquities deserve.” —

Should any individual be so little acquainted with his own heart, as to presume, that, being not “far from “righteousness,” he has no need to deprecate the divine judgment; let him, in the cool moments of reflection, after examining the perfect rule of life set before him, consider the deviations in his past conduct with all their aggravating circumstances; and, on applying to himself this

awful question, "How much owest *thou* unto my Lord?" the still small voice of conscience will suggest—"thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."—

In the rising generation we behold an attachment to frivolous pursuits, an aversion to reasonable restraint, an indifference to the judgment of superiors, an immoderate love of pleasure—dispositions unfavourable to the cause of truth, virtue, and religion, yet manifest in their considering moral obligations only as subservient to convenience, and in treating both natural and revealed religion, as if unbelievers had demonstrated both to be false.

Among those persons, whose situation in life, being removed from the evils and temptations attendant on the extreme either of poverty or riches, is the most favourable to happiness, because most favourable to virtue, there is found a misplaced ambition of copying licentious manners, and adopting irreligious sentiments; apparent in their profaning the Sabbath, absenting themselves from public worship, remaining ignorant of the Scriptures, and disregarding the religion of the blessed Jesus.

While we lament the evils, which originate with the most profligate of the people, and, by extending their baneful influence,

influence, induce, not merely the most distressed of the poor, but (as our courts of justice now more than ever attest) persons entrusted with property, confidential dependants, “to steal, and take God’s holy name in vain;” is it not likewise dreadful to reflect, that, in the higher ranks of society, among those who know, or have every means of knowing, “the way of God more perfectly,” there are numbers, who “have altogether broken the yoke, and burst “the bonds;” who are distinguished for poisoning the sources of public spirit and of domestic happiness by GAMING, DUELLING, and ADULTERY; “glorying in their “shame,” disavowing responsibility, and saying in their hearts, “Who is the Lord that we should fear him?”

When folly and profaneness, fraud and injustice, vice and infidelity, are thus predominant, I cannot flatter you that our national guilt is not already sufficient to draw down upon us any judgment of God. — Can we seriously reflect on these things without a real concern for our own nation? Can we feel that concern without deprecating the judgments of God? For, if it be the unavoidable consequence of immorality and contempt of religion to weaken and dissolve the bands of society, let us not so grossly flatter ourselves, as to imagine that our condition is secure; or, that the
Almighty,

Almighty, though "rich in mercy," will protect and preserve those, who persist in violating his commands, in rejecting his word and ordinances, and in abusing his mercy and loving kindness. —

II.—If, from these instances of the *Want* of righteousness observable among ourselves, I now, in the second place, advert to the national character of our present continental foes, it will be done solely with this design, that, in being warned by their miserable example, "calling our own ways to remembrance, and learning righteousness," we may not in our own nation and persons experience the just judgment of God.—

We are now involved in a war, in all its circumstances, probably, never yet paralleled. In justification of our part in the present continental war, it is pleaded, and with truth—that we are not the aggressors—that we act on the defensive—that our enemies wage war against order, society, and religion—and that our own preservation and existence, as a free, civilized, and Christian people, turns on restraining their unbounded ambition.

To the introduction of the miseries now endured by our enemies in France, the principles of their philosophical instructors,

instructors, and the sentiments of their political leaders, have largely contributed.

Their philosophers have long been industrious to deprive the mind of the *hope* of immortality: they have exerted their talents to “ rob us of the earnest expectation of the “ creature,” and leave us to drink the dregs of the cup of human misery, without any consolation to sustain our spirit: they have assumed the character of lovers of human nature, while they represented the grave as the eternal sleep of body and soul; and of friends to truth, while they ridiculed the belief, and denied the existence, of God.— Wretched is that system of philosophy, “ falsely so called,” which tends to despoil good men of their dearest hopes, and to free the abandoned from the apprehension of a “ judgment to come!”—Despicable is the understanding, which imagines that social enjoyment is to be heightened, by levelling us with the beasts who perish—that our true and proper happiness consists in “ corrupting ourselves in those things, “ which we know naturally”—and that, by despising religion, we shall advance the freedom and perfection of our nature! These frantic suggestions, the offspring of pride and sensuality, shew what absurdities, what debasing sentiments, what licentious and atheistical principles, men, even of brilliant

brilliant and cultivated genius, may adopt, when, lost in imaginary independence, they account themselves too *great* to be good, and too *wise* to be religious.

They, whose minds are not yet perverted by infidelity, will therefore continue thinking it most expedient to walk in the "good old paths;" and to "train up their children," in the *fear*, not in the *denial*, of God. They will guard against the contagion of foreign philosophy: a system of the most unsound positions, which have ever disgraced the understanding, and polluted the heart, of man; a system, which, in attempting to exclude "the fear of God," rends asunder all the duties, all the charities, all the comfort of life; destroys moral sentiment, and eradicates natural affection. —

When, together with such philosophical principles, the sentiments of their political leaders, on 'the abstract and 'imprescriptible Rights of Man,' were generally diffused, it is the less to be wondered at, that the people of France, allured by the more intelligible promises of 'Liberty and Equality,' should avail themselves of their own strength: and, after exhibiting in their own nation, dreadful instances of their sovereign power, should hold forth to surrounding nations the offer
of

of the same ' Liberty and Equality ;' or threaten them with all the horrors of war and desolation. '

They now feel, and the whole nation for ages to come will most severely feel, the direful consequences of rebellion against the laws of God and man.— Let the miseries now existing in that kingdom, teach us (if we have need to be taught) the value of peace and order, of virtue and religion — Let the alienation of mind in so many millions of the inhabitants from all sense of allegiance ; from the ties of conscience, and the sanctions of religion — Let their ferocity, which has already filled an extensive empire with internal desolation, has led to the plunder and destruction of immense property ; to the perpetration of acts disgraceful to the most savage tribes ; of every indecency and barbarity which could be exercised on the feelings and lives of their fellow citizens, their legal magistrates, their spiritual instructors, and their gracious Sovereign — Let the madness, which, to fill up " the measure of their iniquity," has

C

induced

' Declaration of the National Convention of France—

- ' That it will treat as enemies the people, who, refusing or renouncing Liberty and
- ' Equality, are desirous of preserving their Prince and privileged casts, or of entering
- ' into an accommodation with them.'

The EXAMPLE OF FRANCE a WARNING to BRITAIN.

By ARTHUR YOUNG. Page 152, 3d Edit. 1793.

induced them to convert to heathenish superstition temples dedicated to the worship of God; to “ deny the Lord who “ bought them;” to blaspheme the Saviour of the world, and to defy the power of God: — Let these dreadful effects of anarchy prove to us BRITONS so many admonitions not to trifle with lawful authority; not “ to despise “ government;” not to endanger the civil and religious blessings we now enjoy.

Those blessings for many generations have been well understood, and largely experienced, in this nation: they are the fruits of the united wisdom of ages: they were obtained by the labours, and purchased by the lives, of our illustrious forefathers. The possession of that *Inheritance* should prevail with every honest member of the community, every lover of his country, every friend to God and man, to prevent, as far as lies in his power, the diffusion of those principles, which tend to destroy property, subvert religion, and introduce

“ The quarrel now raging in that once flourishing kingdom (*France*) is not between liberty and tyranny, or between protecting and oppressing systems of government; it is, on the contrary, collected to a single point—it is alone a question of *Property*; it is a trial at arms, whether those who have *nothing*, shall not seize and possess the property of those who have *something*. A dreadful question—a horrid struggle, which can never end but in the equal and universal ruin of all.”—

introduce anarchy and desolation. For it is too notorious to be denied—that our foreign adversaries have their advocates here—that “from among ourselves have arisen men “speaking perverse,” and most seditious, things; that, of our own nation there are numbers, who, from rooted aversion to our Constitution in Church and State, would not be grieved at the annihilation of both: numbers, desirous to adopt the ‘Levelling System,’ in theory so plausibly delineated here, as to conceal the evils experimentally felt abroad: numbers, in whom there exists a strong disposition to enforce ‘the sacred right (as it is called) of insurrection.’

The liberty, now too generally pursued, is founded on this frantic idea—exemption from all restraint and authority—from the laws of man—and from the fear of God. But, though that liberty were as universal as it is destructive, to glory in it will ever be among the signs of “a reprobate “mind.” It is no honour to a man to be merely less unprincipled than his neighbour: it is no credit to a nation to be only not so abandoned as another.

We ought seriously to reflect, that, though under the sanction of Government, we now, individually and collectively,

lectively, enjoy the security of property, the protection of our persons, and the profession of religious principles; yet those invaluable blessings could not exist, if lawful authority were violently overborne. It is therefore incumbent on us all, as we value life, order, and religion, to guard against the avowed disturbers of society.

Let us not presume on our *present* distance from the actual horrors of war; nor confide too much either on the justice of our cause, or on the approved valour of the combined armies; nor too hastily conclude, that the troubles in Europe will speedily be terminated: for, so great are the numbers and the enthusiasm of our open enemies—so great the vigilance and subtlety of our clandestine foes—such the nature of the abstract principles, which have, in a great measure, given birth to the present troubles—and, such are “ the

“ Let the Farmers of this kingdom represent to themselves a picture of what their situation would be, if their labourers, their servants, and the paupers whom they support by poor's rates, were all armed, and, in some measure, regimented, and in possession of the vestry, voting not only the money to be raised by rates, but the division of it among themselves; decreeing what the price of all the farmers' products should be, what wages should be paid to servants, and what pay to labourers. Under such a system of government, I beg to ask, what security would remain for a single shilling in the pockets of those, who are at present in a state of ease and affluence?”

“ the signs of the times ”—that no human mind can form a judgment of the consequences.

War is, in itself, a dreadful alternative. Although victory should attend that nation, whose cause is just, yet to both nations—war is one of God’s judgments. Before that mark of the divine displeasure is experienced, inferior warnings must have been repeatedly resisted. National judgments are dreadful in the extreme. To every individual they bring distress and misery. “ When a man’s foes are those of his own household,” when civil discord reigns, imagination cannot paint the dreadful apprehensions ; words cannot describe the universal consternation and horror : for there is no “ compassion—upon young man or maiden ; old man or him that stoopeth for age : ”* “ they, that have fed delicately, are desolate in the streets : they, that were brought up in scarlet, embrace dunghills : the young children ask for bread ; and the tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst ! ”†

We have this day offered up our prayers and supplications to the Divine Majesty, ‘ for averting those heavy judgments which our manifold provocations have most justly deserved.’

But

* 2 Chronicles xxxvi. 17.

† Lamentations iv.

But we shall best answer the intent of this day's solemnity, and best prove our sincerity, by "setting God *always* before us:" shewing in our own conduct an example of righteousness; discharging the public and private duties of religion; training up those committed to our care, whose salvation *ought* to be dear unto us, "in the fear of God:" and in secular concerns, manifesting a spirit of integrity, good-will, and charity.

To the rebellious inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, who said to the prophets, "prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits, cause the Holy One of *Israel* to cease from before us," *Isaiab* was commissioned to deliver these words: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: bring no more vain oblations: put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes: cease to do evil; learn to do well." And can we, who are blest with the knowledge of the Gospel, imagine that God will accept any homage instead of the sacrifice of our hearts? Can we, to whom are revealed the inestimable love of God, in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ—the certainty of future existence—and "of a judgment to come," look for protection from heaven, while we dishonour the
 " doctrine

“ doctrine of God our Saviour,” by an unholy life and conversation? Therefore “ cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and
 “ purify your hearts, ye double-minded: rent your hearts
 “ and not your garments: cast away from you all your
 “ transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin.”—

It may be *too late* for to cry for *mercy*, when *judgment* is come. “ Before the evil days come,” may we all “ learn
 “ righteousness!”—May it please God to spare all those who confess his holy name!—May the mercy of God rest upon us, like as we do put our trust in him!—May peace, safety, and prosperity, be restored and perpetuated to our Sovereign and his kingdoms! and may the Grace of God enable us to “ know the things that belong to our *everlasting*
 “ peace—before they are hid from our eyes.”

*Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible,
 the only wise God, be honour and glory,
 for ever and ever. AMEN.*

" doctrine of God our Saviour, by an unfeigned and
veracious. Therefore, cleanse your hands, ye saints, and
purify your hearts, ye devout, ye who are
and not your garments: and say to yourselves all you
" strengthened one to supply that which is your want."

It may be said for to say that, when I
incom. " Before the evil day come, may we all be
" righteousness!"—But it is not to be all that
who consists his holy name!—But the name of God
upon us like as we do put on that which is—May peace
fidelity and prosperity be yours and be preserved to our
Sovereign and his kingdom! and may the Grace of God
enable us to " know the things that belong to our salvation."
" Peace—before they are hid from our eyes."

Now unto the King eternal, Amen.
The only wife (and) the only one
for ever and ever. Amen.

